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Editors' Introduction

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PILGRIMAGE PALIMPSESTS

Storytelling and Intersubjectivity
Across Multiple Shrines, Sites, and Routes

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Pilgrimage Palimpsests: Storytelling and Intersubjectivity Across Multiple Shrines, Sites, and Routes



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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

A young British Catholic visits Medjugorje, the site of ongoing apparitions of the Virgin Mary, but he confesses he prefers the Lourdes shrine. It is more Christ-centered, he says, and therefore thrusts him more deeply into the ethical perplexities of caring for the sick. At Kalwaria Paławska in Ukraine, post-War border revisions and ethnic displacements are central to the shrine's historical consciousness and current identity as a Latin-rite Catholic shrine. References to making an "ecumenical pilgrimage" and spatial practices like erecting a cross on the site of a former Greek Catholic chapel help pilgrims remember the shrine's former identity as "the mountain of two rites"—a holy site for both Eastern and Western rite pilgrims. In Romania, a mother remembers healing her daughter with a handkerchief from the local Our Lady of Csíksomlyó shrine. But when the daughter challenges this narrative—and in the process highlights hidden class differences that threaten the family's shared sense of empathy—the mother substitutes both the story and the object for another relating to the Lourdes shrine. In the Northeastern United States, a statue of an angel circulates between two sites of remembrance that mark mass murders: a September 11th memorial in Staten Island and a Catholic church in Newtown, Connecticut. As it makes this journey, it becomes entwined in the memories and stories of different communities.

No shrine is an island, to adapt a famous phrase, and even those located on islands are more connected than separated by oceans and seas. By listing these cases, we point out just a few of the ethnographically rich moments when pilgrims juxtapose multiple pilgrimage sites in and through culturally, socially, and institutionally mediated stories, memories, objects, and spaces. These examples illustrate how, as a practice, visiting multiple shrines is not an outlying trend but rather one that is growing in popularity around the world. In many societies today, it is not uncommon for pilgrims to visit more than one pilgrimage site, route, or shrine over the course of their lifetimes. A host of networks and institutions have emerged to foster and accommodate this practice. Each year, millions of pilgrims visit shrines administered by members of the European Marian Network (EMN), an association that facilitates collaboration among Catholic pilgrimage sites in Europe. The



Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome and other pilgrim groups also offer resources to travelers on routes between major shrines, like the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome. Other pilgrims pay to participate in tours led by commercial travel companies that center around visits to multiple pilgrimage sites. Individuals and groups may visit a new shrine in less formal or more unexpected ways, too. Individuals might come across different shrines while traveling abroad for work, or they may read about a pilgrimage route online and feel compelled to visit it. Emerging technologies and modes of transportation, growing interest in leisure travel, and increasingly porous state borders that allow for labor migration are but a few of the global dynamics that have helped to foster this trend of journeying to multiple shrines.

Yet the dynamics of this practice and the question of what it *means*, for both individuals and communities, to encounter different pilgrimage sites over time remain largely unexamined. This lacuna may stem from a “singularism” in pilgrimage studies as well as the lingering effects of anthropology’s long standing preference for place over movement and circulation.

“Singularism” names pilgrimage studies’ tendency to study single shrines, sites, or routes; a single scholar claims to be an expert on a single pilgrimage site where this researcher conducts long-term ethnographic research. This tendency was evident in pilgrimage studies from its earliest days in the early 1990s when a diverse group of scholars developed a body of literature in the “anthropology of pilgrimage.” Initial field-defining statements developed the concepts of pilgrimage *communitas* and ritual process.¹ Subsequent contributions included analyses of person, place, text, and mobility, as well as landscape, history, and politics.² Recently, studies of revived

1 Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

2 Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). John Eade and Michael Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London: Routledge, 1991). Nancy Louise Frey, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998). Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993). Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006). Simon Coleman and John Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004). John Eade and Mario Katić, *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-making in*



or secularizing pilgrimage sites have contributed to debates about the confluence of religion and commodification, materiality, and tourism.³

This wide variety of topics and themes points to pilgrimage studies' thoroughgoing "eclecticism,"⁴ yet this eclecticism is belied by a persistent "singularist" assumption in this field of research. This tendency may reflect the lingering influence of anthropology's method of close participant observation in a circumscribed location, the "bounded" village field site, or, in this case, the pilgrimage shrine. The nature of pilgrimage advertising itself may also play a role, since packaged tours to distant shrines are often framed as "once-in-a-lifetime" trips. While anthropologists have challenged this approach in a variety of ways, perhaps most recognizable by moving toward "multi sited fieldwork," it is still the case that edited collections in pilgrimage studies are typically divided up by the formula: one chapter, one shrine/route. Pilgrimage studies monographs often feature a reference to a central concept followed by a preposition and the name of the site: "...to Santiago;" "in Shikoku;" "and the Lourdes Shrine." This singular approach persists even among studies that emphasize circularity over pilgrimage as a linear, to-and-fro journey.⁵ There are, of course, exceptions to the rule of using research on a single shrine or route to define the parameters of what can be theorized about pilgrimage.⁶ While these ethno-

Eastern Europe: Crossing the Borders (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2014). Avril Madrell, "Mobilising the Landscape and the Body in Search of the Spiritual: Journeying, Performance, and Community," in *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage: Journeying to the Sacred*, ed. Avril Madrell, Veronica della Dora, Alessandro Scafi, and Heather Walton (New York: Routledge, 2015), 150-170.

- 3 Eric Cohen, "Who Is a Tourist? A Conceptual Review," *Sociological Review* 22 (1974): 27-53. Eric Cohen, "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences," *Sociology* 13 (1979): 179-201. Nelson H. Graburn, "Tourism: The Sacred Journey," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 21-36. Simon Coleman, "Putting It All Together Again: Pilgrimage, Healing at Walsingham," in *Pilgrimage and Healing*, ed. Jill Dubisch and Michael Winkelman (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 91-134. Avril Maddrell, "Praying the Keeills: Rhythm, Meaning, and Experience on Pilgrimage Journeys in the Isle of Man," *Landabrefid* 25 (2011): 15-29. Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman, *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004). Simon Coleman and Mike Crang, eds., *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).
- 4 Reader, *Making Pilgrimages*, 29.
- 5 David Haberman, *Journey through the Twelve Forests: An Encounter with Krishna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- 6 Jill Dubisch and Raymond Michalowski, *Run for the Wall: Remembering Vietnam on a Motorcycle Pilgrimage* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001). Peter J. Margry, *Shrines and Pil-*

graphic descriptions and theoretical accounts of multiple journeys are evocative and suggestive, they remain scattered in the absence of a conceptual framework that would allow them to align with each other. The one chapter/monograph, one shrine/route approach has led pilgrimage studies literature to overlook the fact that in the contemporary period people are increasingly developing and negotiating the meanings of pilgrimage through visits to *multiple* shrines and pilgrimage sites or through journeys on *multiple* routes.

This issue of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* proposes and explores the concept of “pilgrimage palimpsests” not only to fill in this lacuna but also—by way of a robust cross-cultural analysis of Catholic pilgrimage sites and Catholics who go to multiple pilgrimage sites—to raise broader theoretical questions about narrative, memory, and meaning in the context of ethnographic research on lived Catholicism. Without advocating a formal and universally applicable definition of a palimpsest, we wish to clarify how we use the word in the context of the conversation out of which this collection has grown. The word “palimpsest” has Latin and Greek derivations. Its etymology has a concrete reference point: a palimpsest refers to a manuscript page from which the text has been washed off for reuse as the basis of another document. The document becomes a palimpsest when the original writing later reemerges on the page, in and around the later text.⁷ In this case, the etymological reference to scraping suggests the necessarily material character of language and meaning, its mediation through habits of bodily practice: scraping refers to the fact that ancient Greeks and Romans used wax-coated tablets, like scratch-pads, to write on with a stylus. After finishing the text, scribes would erase the writing by smoothing the wax surface and writing again. Narratives became intertwined and meanings were destabilized as scholars attempted to craft their own narratives, literally in and through, the writings of earlier authors.⁸ Palimpsests thus point to the embodied, intersubjective frameworks that shape storytelling and the creation

grimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

7 Georges Declercq, ed., *Early Medieval Palimpsests* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

8 Leo Carruthers, Raleen Chai-Elsholz and Tatjana Silec, *Palimpsests and the Literary Imagination of Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).



of narrative memories.⁹

Palimpsests also point to the social, especially economic, conditions of memory, history, storytelling, and interpretation. Palimpsests came about through an accident of thrift and frugality. In Europe's medieval period, the scarcity of writing and record-keeping materials like vellum led scribes to reuse these materials, scraping off and then writing over old manuscripts. These reused materials became unexpectedly valuable, and the palimpsest became a valuable scholarly tool, in the 19th century when researchers within the emerging field of biblical historical criticism began using them to recover seemingly lost manuscripts. Now valued as a puzzles composed of multiple texts to decipher and interpret, palimpsests were vehicles for 19th century academic researchers' emerging historical consciousness and sense for what was valuable about the past.

The articles included in this special issue illuminate how the palimpsest is not only a useful metaphor or heuristic for discussing pilgrimage in the contemporary world but, as noted above, serves as a theoretical tool that illuminates trends commonly overlooked by scholars of pilgrimage. Additionally, each author's nuanced ethnographic research shows the breadth, depth, and diversity of "Catholic pilgrimage" in our world today. First, Michael Agnew traces the experiences of self-described "pilgrimage junkies" who have traveled to Lourdes repeatedly over the course of many years. These Catholics situate Lourdes in relation to other shrines and sites that they have visited, in many cases emphasizing that certain sites facilitate more immediate forms of connection with the sacred than others. The second article in this collection, written by Iuliia Buyskykh, draws from the author's ethnographic fieldwork in Eastern Poland. The close proximity of two pilgrimage sites in an area now inhabited by Roman Catholic Poles—and the location of these sites near the Polish-Ukrainian border—provides the opportunity to consider how multiple communities are negotiating their relationships with and memories of one another through the experiences and narratives that emerge there. Marc Loustau's article about the material cultures of healing further broadens the spatial and imagined

9 Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

landscapes of Catholic pilgrimage addressed in this special issue. Here readers come to see how contemporary Transylvanian Hungarian Catholics who inhabit the villages surrounding Csíksomlyó situate themselves in relation to other Marian pilgrimage sites such as Lourdes. Finally, Kate DeConinck theorizes visitation to sites of remembrance in New York and Connecticut as a contemporary form of pilgrimage in which American Catholics are working to make meaning out of traumatic events and forge connections with other communities touched by tragedy. As with Loustau's article, this final contribution considers how material objects are circulating across multiple sites, destabilizing singular notions of place and memory as they do so. Taken together, these four articles show the breadth, depth, and diversity of Catholic pilgrimage in the contemporary world. In tracing the journeys and stories of individuals who identify as Catholic, we do not strive to portray Catholicism as a stable or consistent monolith. Instead, we hope that this collection will help readers discover what various individuals in today's world feel is "Catholic" about their lives and experiences.

In what follows, we briefly introduce the three primary themes that organize this collection and which we were inspired to formulate by the concept of palimpsests: a shared focus on experience, intersubjectivity, and storytelling; the motivations and practices of memory; and, the material dimensions of multisited pilgrimages.

EXPERIENCE, INTERSUBJECTIVITY, AND STORYTELLING

The palimpsest, when deployed as a theoretical tool for analyzing multisited pilgrimages, illuminates the extent to which Catholics, and human beings more broadly, experience themselves and the world dialogically—in relations with the persons, places, memories, stories, and other elements that constitute their social existence. The present issue is thus genealogically linked to works in phenomenology and anthropology that define intersubjectivity as the interplay between subjects and objects, the singular and the multiple, and individuals and communities.¹⁰

10 Michael Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the Anthropological Project* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Michael Jackston, *The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt*, Second edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013). Robert Desjarlais, "Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40



The intersubjective nature of contemporary pilgrimage cuts across this issue along several trajectories. For example, Buyskykh conducted research at a Roman Catholic shrine that also attracts Greek Catholic and Orthodox pilgrims. The fact that the site's present-day hosts belong to an order of Franciscan Catholic brothers is not a constant concern for these pilgrims. Rather, by tracking pilgrims' pathways around the site, she shows how people become aware of the site's Roman Catholic identity in both orchestrated actions and accidental encounters. Buyskykh's article provides a valuable service by bringing Robert Hayden's concept of "antagonistic tolerance," which has been highly influential for research on pilgrimage in Eastern Europe, into conversation with the field of pilgrimage studies more broadly. Buyskykh observes that the prototypical "experiences" of pilgrimage—"spiritual relief" and "healing"—are actually enhanced when pilgrims of different traditions encounter each other at Kalwaria Paławska. This case study illustrates the value of letting pilgrims themselves teach scholars what makes a site Catholic and how its "Catholic-ness" comes to matter in the course of their lived experience.

MOTIVATIONS AND PRACTICES OF MEMORY

Building off the dynamics of intersubjectivity described in the section above, pilgrims' stories also enact the relationship between past, present, and future in dialogue with other journeys and narratives. This dialogue is enacted as the mutual recognition of experience that is both distinctive and shared—telling a story about a pilgrimage is an act of writing onto a text about a past self's journeys. A mother and daughter storytelling duo in Loustau's contribution, for example, remember the daughter's childhood hospitalization for a serious illness as an important and formative experience. A desire to honor but also elide the differences of class and socio-geographic position that characterize their current circumstances both motivates and destabilizes the process of remembering this healing as either a religious miracle or a psychosomatic healing. As Loustau demonstrates, their need to address these differences is no less urgent or troubling for being rooted in embodied intersubjective experience and then articulated through abstract religious and secular worldviews. For the young British Catholic interviewed by Agnew, contrasting

(October 2011): 87-102.

Medjugorje as a site for divine interventions and the Lourdes shrine as a place of ethical care reveals his first and primary commitment to the latter, where he spent years helping for the sick and ailing. His motivation for remembering Medjugorje as a disappointment is, in the end, also more in keeping with his biography and life trajectory; he was, after all, a healer at Lourdes both before and after his trip to Medjugorje. Agnew's piece thus illustrates the value of tracking memories of multiple pilgrimages along paths formed by pilgrims' lived experience.

MATERIALITY AND MULTISITED PILGRIMAGES

Finally, the contributions to this issue address the complex material dynamics that come to life variously through multisited pilgrimages. Recent scholarship in the field of material religion insists that religion exists not only in texts or abstract systems of belief, but also in the "things" that constitute religious lifeworlds.¹¹ In the framework provided by this collection, the benefits of adopting this new approach to studying religion come forth perhaps most forcefully in DeConinck's article, which demonstrates how multisited pilgrimages do not only involve the journeying of human beings between places, but also the movement of material memory objects like the angel statue that her Catholic interviewee has brought to different sites of remembrance. Cases like this one reveal the extent to which pilgrims in today's world deploy objects to help them negotiate relationships with other people—in this case, trying to facilitate modes of what DeConinck calls "trans-situational bonding"—as well as their own complicated memories and experiences. Similar dynamics are also present in the objects and substances in use by Loustau's interviewees, who circulate and share water from Lourdes with others in their community. Buyskykh shows how the material and spatial dimensions of a space are altered and negotiated over time as new and alternative sites emerge on the top of the same hill. The layering of pilgrimage journeys and narratives may thus also result in the transformation and marking of physical landscapes.

At the early stages of this project on multisited pilgrimage, anthropological

11 David Morgan, "Introduction: The matter of belief," in *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, ed. David Morgan (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1-17. Sonia Hazard, "The Material Turn in the Study of Religion," *Religion and Society* 4 (2013): 58-78.



research by Simon Coleman and Jill Dubisch provided in equal measures important inspiration and direction. Dubisch's books created a model for research on pilgrimage that spans and bridges multiple traditions, times, and places. She has written about the Greek Orthodox Christian shrine to the Virgin Mary at Tinos as well as secular journeys like the annual "Run for the Wall" pilgrimage to the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, DC.¹² Dubisch provided valuable feedback and generous intellectual assistance to DeConinck and Loustau as they developed their initial versions of a proposal and Call for Papers that eventually resulted in this special issue.¹³ Our conversations opened up a pathway for us to conceptualize pilgrims' journeys in the broad span of national historical narratives as well as in relation to other collective processions and journeys. Furthermore, a Foreword by Simon Coleman, a trailblazing anthropological scholar of Christianity and pilgrimage, frames this issue with an evocative, forward-looking perspective. Coleman's work in the field of the anthropological study of Christianity has moved back and forth between two different contemporary Christian phenomena: mission campaigns by a Charismatic/Pentecostal church in Sweden and pilgrimage travel to the Virgin Mary's shrine at Walsingham, United Kingdom.¹⁴ Although these practices may seem different at first, when framed within Coleman's capacious intellectual vision their provocative similarities become clear. For instance, in articles about Charismatic/Pentecostal pastors' engagement with the Catholic tradition of sainthood, Coleman shows how globetrotting missionaries—who visit sites as far-flung as Moscow's Red Square and Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee—mediate "sacred power to believers as well as to landscapes." This insight resonates with anthropologist Tim Ingold's argument, on which Buyskykh draws in her analysis of territorialized memories at Kalwaria Pałacowska, that "remembering is...

12 Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place*. Dubisch and Michalowski, *Run for the Wall*.

13 In particular, working with Dubisch at this early stage in our project helped us to harvest new insights from her groundbreaking book about the Tinos Greek Orthodox island shrine, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine*.

14 Coleman, 2000. Simon Coleman, "Pilgrimage as Trope for an Anthropology of Christianity," *Current Anthropology* 55 S10 (2014): S281-S291. Simon Coleman, "Purity as Danger? Seduction and Sexuality at Walsingham," in *The Seductions of Pilgrimage: Sacred Journeys Afar and Astray in the Western Religious Tradition*, ed. Michael DiGiovine and David Picard (New York: Routledge, 2016), 53-69.

engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past.”¹⁵ Finally, we are grateful for the help of the *Journal of Global Catholicism*’s editorial staff and especially its founding editor, Mathew Schmalz, in bringing this collection to successful publication. Ultimately, we hope that this collection’s themes can provide a framework for future research across multiple shrines, sites, and routes.¹⁶

15 Quoted in Buyskykh, 66.

16 We would also like to express our gratitude to the peer reviewers for their generous and encouraging comments.

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